

TOWN OF HOPKINTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
Minutes of Meeting
Town, School District, Hopkinton Village and Contoocook Village Precincts
Wednesday, December 8, 2021
Approved January 12, 2022

CALL MEETING TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mark Zankel called the meeting to order at 5:30pm immediately followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT – There were 10 Members present.

Committee Member	Attendance	Committee Member	Attendance
Don Houston	Present	Rich Houston	Present
Norm Goupil	Present	Thomas Lipoma	Present
Ken Traum	Present	Christa Scura	Present
Steve Reddy	Present	Mark Zankel	Present
Jonathan Cohen	Present	Deb Norris	Present

OTHER ATTENDEE:

Neal Cass, Town Administrator

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF November 10, 2021

Ken Traum motioned, seconded by Jonathan Cohen, to approve the minutes of November 10, 2021.

Mark Zankel asked if there were any corrections needed.

A vote was taken to approve the motion for approval of the minutes of the Budget Committee meeting of November 10, 2021.

Committee Member	Vote	Committee Member	Vote
Don Houston	Approved	Rich Houston	Approved
Norm Goupil	Approved	Thomas Lipoma	Approved
Ken Traum	Approved	Christa Scura	Approved
Steve Reddy	Abstained	Mark Zankel	Approved
Jonathan Cohen	Approved	Deb Norris	Approved

TOWN BUDGET PROPOSAL – Ken Traum and Neal Cass

Ken Traum thanked the many individuals, Committees and Boards who were involved in developing the 2022 Proposed Town Budget. The Town proposed budget documents were provided to members for review prior to the meeting and hard copies handed out. Ken Traum began his presentation to the Budget Committee giving a summary of the proposed budget reporting on the estimated revenue and operating budget. He then discussed the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding and Capital Reserve/Maintenance Trust Fund.

Ken Traum stated that the Town would like to create a new capital reserve fund trust to be known as Payroll Liability Trust in amount of \$10,000. This would especially be used towards the costs for retiring personnel.

Ken Traum stated that there are no individual Warrant articles. He then discussed the use of Fund Balance which offsets the amount needed to be raised by taxes.

Before moving on to questions, Ken Traum reported on the Houston Barn Capital Reserve Fund for repairing of the Houston Barn. The Houston Barn Committee, some of who were in attendance, was formed and findings were presented to the Select Board with four scenarios. These scenarios were displayed and discussed. Ken stated that these scenarios were received by the Select Board only two days ago and need further review. He stated this is a heads up and that the Select Board didn't vote on any one scenario or decide how they wish to proceed. He discussed the financing option possibilities to fund the removal or repair of the barn.

Ken then opened up his presentation for questions. Both Ken Traum and Neal Cass addressed the questions raised regarding the proposed budget.

There was discussion by the Committee on the scenarios presented by the Houston Barn Committee. Some of the questions related to the use of the barn, the different scenarios, and financing of these scenarios. Lengthy discussion was held regarding presenting to the Town for fundraising in support of saving of the barn.

Relative to a question by Ken Traum as to the sense of the Budget Committee regarding the barn, Mark Zankel urged members at this time to give their thoughts to Ken Traum to bring back to the Select Board. On that note, Mark Zankel noted the two thoughts he had for the Select Board to consider 1) how does the barn stack up with Town Hall or other buildings in terms of needing capital improvement. Is the barn comparable to other buildings, is one more urgent than the other and 2) to think bigger and more comprehensively. What is the campaign to save buildings in our community. Mark stated that there is potential for people in our community to help offset the towns efforts for the barn.

Mark Zankel stated that it would be helpful to understand the appetite of the community for the urgency of what might happen to the barn and willingness for private donations.

Discussion followed by the Committee for what is needed for the barn regarding the use of bonds, where as it is a good time for borrowing, and private donations. Also discussed was what is the cost of doing nothing such as how quickly is the barn going to deteriorate and what is the cost of that.

Christa Scura and others agreed that it is a good idea to have a Warrant Article as a gesture to bring before the Town to have it voted on and a way to move forward.

Rich Houston stated that the rehabilitation of the barn would be a wise investment with costs of reconstruction vs new and considering the uses of the building.

Regarding other items of the budget report, Mark Zankel asked about merit increases stating that salaries have grown. He questioned how the Town feels about wages across the board and are we vulnerable right now.

Neal Cass stated that salaries seem to be still in line with other communities. We have made some increases throughout the year. We are not losing people over salaries.

Norm Goupil stated that at the School Board meeting last evening it was brought to his attention to ask about the Towns plans for the fence at George's Park and what is the projection for replacing it. He stated it was noted by the Board that it is possibly a safety issue.

Ken Traum noted that there were discussions about this at a joint school board/select board meeting. He stated there is a Recreation Facilities Capital Reserve Fund and right now it is proposed to put \$50,000 into that fund in 2022 leaving approximately \$46,000 at the end of the year. He stated that funds could be used for the fence but would like to know where the school board is in sharing costs. There are other issues and it should go beyond the fences.

Neal Cass stated that there is a George Park Plan that includes the fence and in 2018 the estimated cost was approximately \$14,000 but higher now.

Norm Goupil asked for a copy of that plan. Neal Cass stated that a copy of the plan is online.

Mark Zankel asked if there is no time line for the fence although there is a Plan and money in the budget of the Recreation Facilities Capital Reserve Fund.

Norm Goupil asked if we could get a time line. Neal Cass stated that yes we could get a time line and get back to the School Board.

TOWN FINANCIALS UPDATE – Ken Traum

Ken Traum gave a quick update on the Revenue and Expenses referencing the handouts he provided. Revenue probably end with \$100,000 to the good. On expenses we anticipate coming in very close, just under budget.

Mark Zankel stated we have on the books for a meeting next week. Do you anticipate that there will be need for further discussion on the Town budget. Ken stated he didn't anticipate that a meeting would be needed.

HOPKINTON SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET AND FINANCIALS UPDATE – Norm Goupil

Norm Goupil stated that the School District received \$370,000 total back on the building project from BPS, the construction firm for the project. This will be discussed at the building committee meeting and a recommendation will be made to the school board and be voted on. This will begin a new project.

Mark Zankel asked if the School District would consider taking some of this money and putting it towards the fence at George's Park as cost sharing with the Town, as it was considered a safety issue.

Norm Goupil stated that a priority list was created for these funds at the beginning of the process. He stated that he would take this recommendation back to the Board.

Norm Goupil discussed the Superintendent's enrollment report.

Norm Goupil stated that on December 21 the Board anticipates voting on the operating budget along with Warrants. He reported on the discussions at the meeting last evening on the financials. The School District Budget will be brought before Budget Committee at the next meeting.

Jonathan Cohen questioned the drop in enrollment numbers. Comparison of 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 compared to 2020, 2021, 2022.

Norm Goupil stated he would check into this and report back.

Christa Scura questioned whether teacher issues with retention problems exists.

Norm Goupil stated that this would be a Mike Flynn question.

Norm Goupil reviewed November financials and stated nothing significant to report.

Norm Goupil reported on the Strategic Plan. He stated that a Steering Committee was assembled. A packet was provided to the Budget Committee members electronically that outlined areas where feedback will be needed.

Jonathan Cohen stated he is participating in this Steering Committee but is speaking just for himself not the Budget Committee. We have been trying to think about broad categories of where the school is doing well and things they could be doing better. The idea is to reach out to the people in the community and solicit as much feedback as possible. The Committee is going out to people they know to encourage input. Overall goal is to give direction and facilitate communication with the community.

Norm Goupil stated the work of the Steering Committee is available to the public.

CONTOOCOOK PRECINCT FINANCIALS UPDATE – Don Houston

Don Houston reported there are no new updates to report at this time.

HOPKINTON VILLAGE PRECINCT FINANCIALS UPDATE – Thomas Lipoma

Thomas Lipoma reported there are no new updates to report at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Zankel opened the public comment session noting two persons in attendance online. The two attendees noted no comment.

Mark closed the public comment session.

OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion was held on the timing of meetings going forward. The next Budget Committee meeting will be on January 12.

Motion by Jonathan Cohen, seconded by Deb Norris, to adjourn the meeting.

There being no further discussion, a vote was taken on the motion to adjourn.

Committee Member	Vote	Committee Member	Vote
Don Houston	Approved	Thomas Lipoma	Approved
Norm Goupil	Approved	Christa Scura	Approved
Ken Traum	Approved	Jonathan Cohen	Approved
Steve Reddy	Approved	Deb Norris	Approved
Mark Zankel	Approved	Rich Houston	Approved

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Brown, Budget Committee Minute Taker
Town of Hopkinton